



SYLVIA KELSO

BOOK THREE  
OF THE  
RIHANNAR CHRONICLES

The  
Red  
Country

SEQUEL TO THE MOVING WATER



The princess Sellithar will inherit the kingdom of Everran, small, peaceful, secure. And stifling under a dynasty's traditions, that Sellithar burns to strip away.

But when she takes the throne, peace and security end. Lords rebel, once-friendly neighbours hatch plots and threaten war. Everran cannot save itself by force. The one hope of help comes in a dream. Look eastward, the omen says. Find salvation in the desert, where Everran's kings have turned before.

But in the wild, harsh, fickle, fragile, beautiful desert of Hethria, Sellithar meets a legend she has refused to believe exists. An aedr, a genuine wizard, myth and history come to life. An enigmatic, infuriating, unexpected ally in a war she never thought to fight.

She rules a kingdom. He's warden to half Hethria. But he doesn't do well with people, and she's not so good at tact. Yet to survive the threat of an invading empire, Hethria will need them both.

She knows about tactics. He understands reality. They both love Hethria. But what if, to keep something you love, you have to change yourself?

Some wars just can't be won alone.

*The Red Country* is the third book in the Chronicles of Rihannar, successor to *Everran's Bane* and *The Moving Water*, praised by reviewers for the depth of their world-building and attractive characters. This is another vividly realised high fantasy, where love and magic are tested to the utmost in saving a land more beautiful and fragile than any human kingdom, but whose spell no-one who has experienced it will escape.



# THE RED COUNTRY





BOOK THREE OF THE RIHANNAR  
CHRONICLES

THE RED COUNTRY

SYLVIA KELSO

FIVE STAR

*A part of Gale, Cengage Learning*



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For  
Lillian Stewart Carl  
(from the White Queen to the Red Queen . . .)  
For all the usual reasons  
And with more than usual thanks

✓



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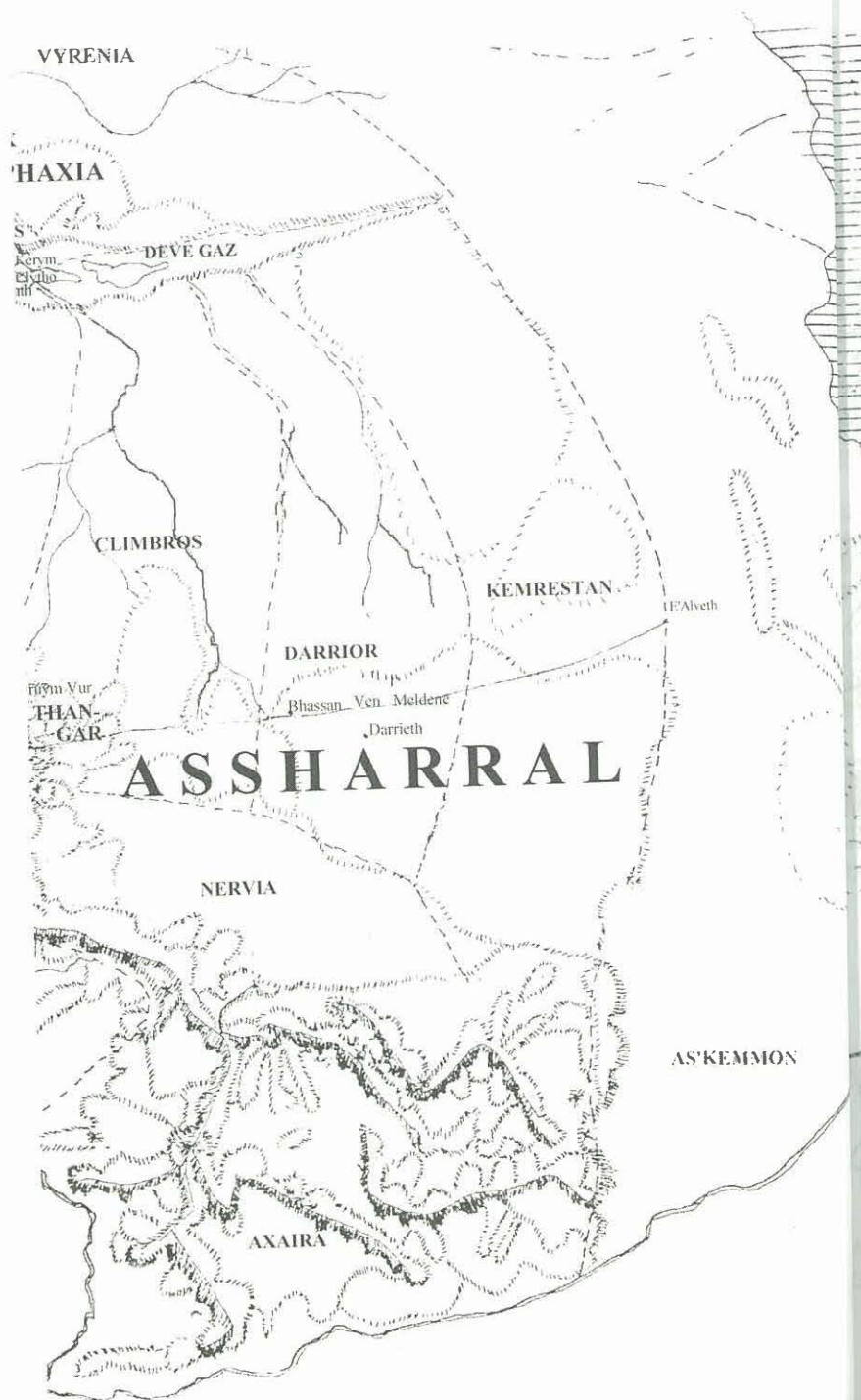
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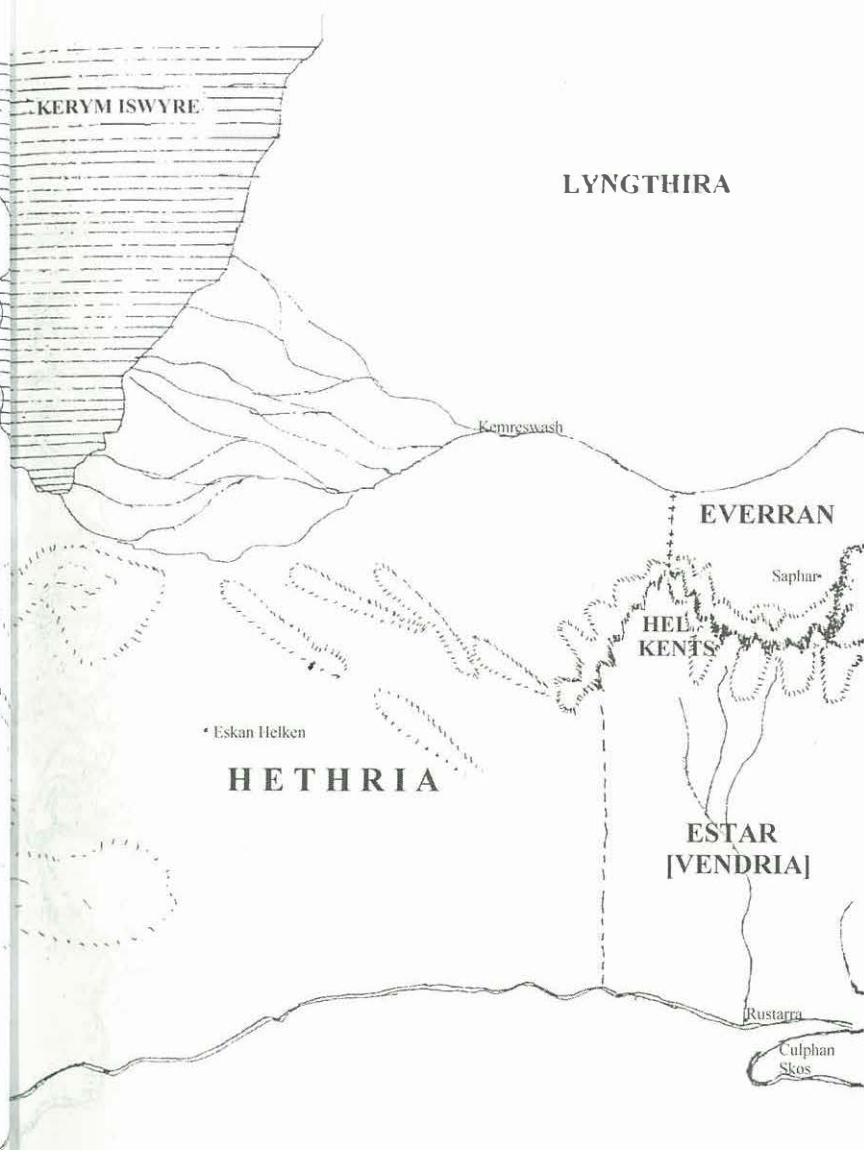
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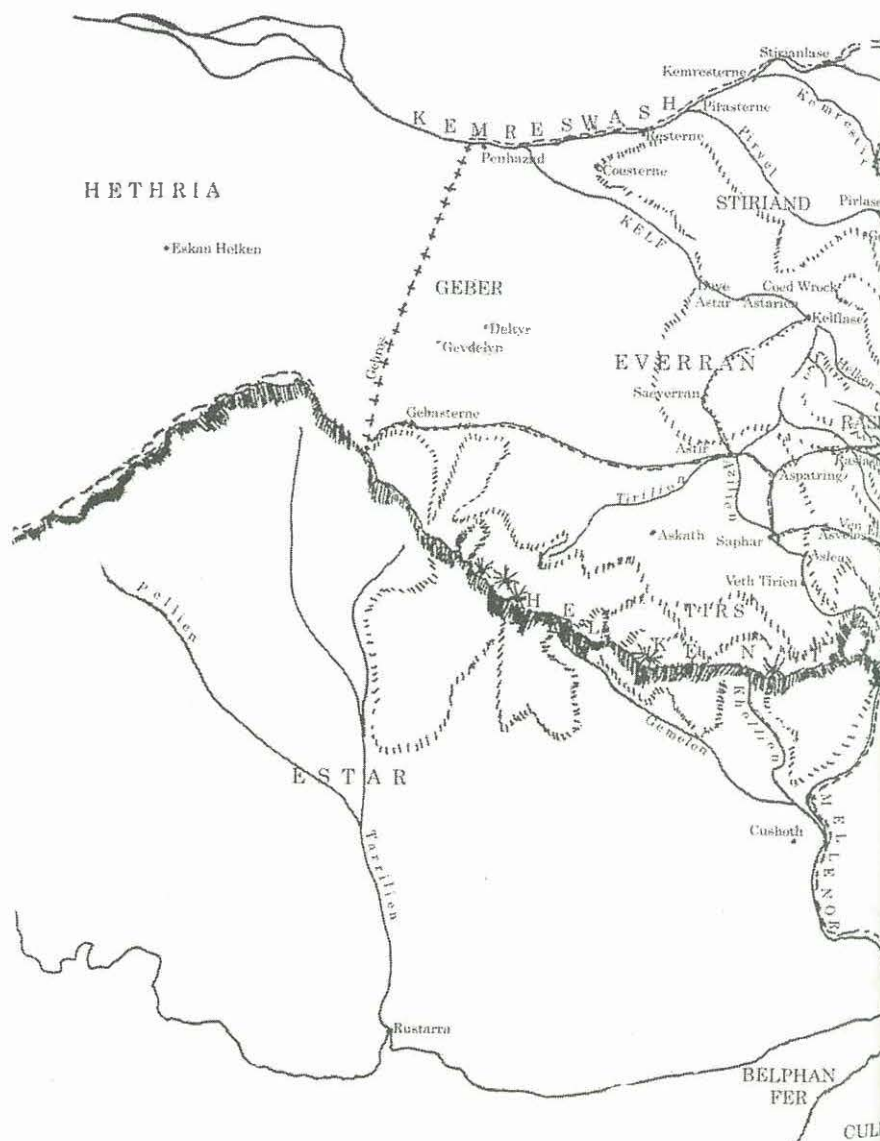




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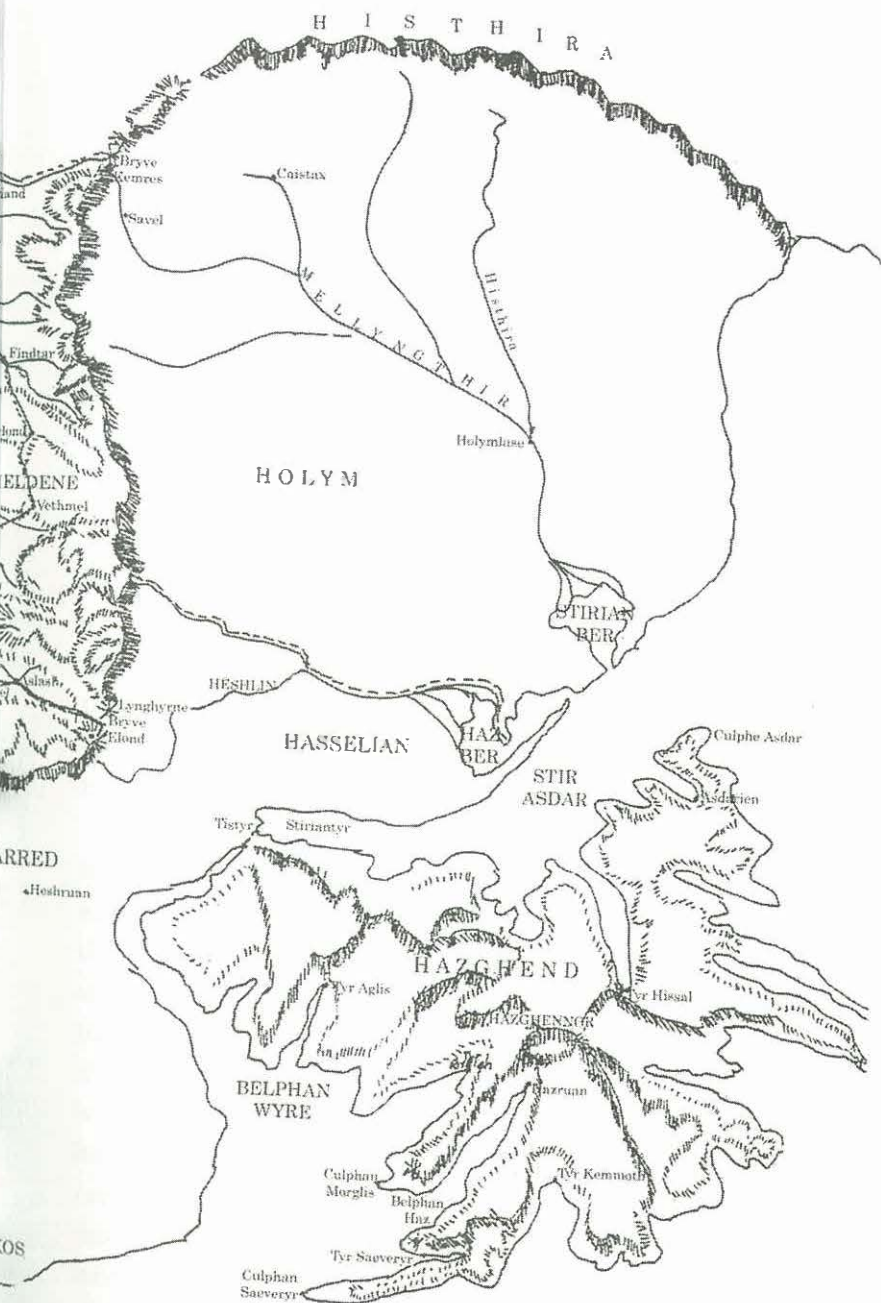
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Everran, Eastern Hethria, The Confederæ







## CHAPTER I

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Had I been capable of speech on my name-day, my parents would never have succeeded in calling me Sellithar. A name like Starflower may be very pretty, and doubtless it is splendid to further a long and noble tradition, but I had little interest in the past and less patience with those who worship it. "Daughter of five royal generations," and "child of an illustrious heritage," and "namesake of the dynasty's founder-mother," bah. I was sure then, and I am surer now, that the first Sellithar would not have given a rotten hethel for such balderdash. Moreover, the palace brats had even less respect for tradition, and I was "Silly-cow" from the first day I ran with them, royal nurse, royal fingernails, royal rank and dignity or not.

The one good thing was that it made me fight for respect instead of being tamely ceded it. I was ten years old, with a most reckless disposition from proving my superior mettle in all the scrapes available, before I won the place to which birth should have entitled me, as leader of the palace pack. By the time the boys' muscles overtook mine, I was fifteen, with my hair up and my skirts down, the contest had shifted fields, and I was still ahead. How easy it is to rout callow suitors when you have a sharp tongue and wit to hone it with! By the time they forsook courting I was eighteen, and all of us were growing into our proper roles, I as the crown princess Sellithar, they as the heirs to Resh-lords or soldiers or wine or hethel-oil magnates who would be the pillars of my realm.



## GLOSSARY

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Proper names given with capitals.

Coll., collective noun

Imp., imperative

Lit., literally—literal translation

Neg., negative particle

**aedr** (pl. **aedryx**), in common sense, wizard. In aedric usage, practitioner of Ruanbrarx, q.v.

**ahltar**, sun

**aivrifel**, (now) antique musical instrument. From aivre, seven (strings), wrifel, honey

**alsyr**, peace. From ax, neg., syre, to weep

**Ammath**, evil. From ax, neg., math, good

**anor**, song, tale

**arskan**, V., third sing. Lit. It is forbidden

**as**, Everran prefix, village

**Asleax**, Everran village. From leax, barley

**a'sparre**, aedric art. From ax, neg., yn-ynx, hands, sparthe, to kill

**aspnor**, hemlock. Lit. white killer, from sparthe, to kill, nur-nor, white

**Assharral**, empire. From asshar, roof-tree

**asterne**, watch-tower, outpost, lookout post

**Asthyn**, pl. of axthir, dead. From ax, neg., thire, to be, with play on thira, light

**Astil**, Everran village. From ilien, water

**axos**, aedric art. To blind. From ax, neg., os, eye

**axvyr**, infinity. From ax, neg., vyrne, last, end

**axvystar**, everlasting daisy. From ax, neg., vyrne, end, tar, flower

**Axynbrarve**, aedric art. Telekinesis. Lit. to act without hands, from ax, neg. particle, yn-ynx, hands, briarve, to act or have power to act

**az**, blue

**azian**, sapphire. Also Hethrian flower, prob. Leschenaultia biloba, from az, blue, iahn, fire, flame

**Azilien**, Everran river. Lit. Blue-water

**ber**, sea

**Berheage**, first Everran royal dynasty, from ber, sea, heage, family

**Berrian**, Aedric personal name. Lit. Sea-fire or flame

**brenx**, peak

**breve**, pass

**Breve Tirien**, pass between Everran and Estar. Lit. South-pass

**briarve**, to act, with sense of having power/competency to do so

**cerisval**, galah. From cerisk, pink, val, wing

**Chake**, aedric art. To command by compulsion

**Climbros**, Assharran province. Lit. Grain-walls, from climbar, grain, os, wall

**Coesterne**, Everran northern garrison town. From coed, farm, asterne, lookout post

**Cruin Los.** Lit. Sometime-spring, from los, lios, spring, cuir, occasional

**culphan,** cape

**Darrior,** Assharran province. From darriith, room, space

**dassyk,** Hethrian caravan halt. Sathellin (q.v.) dialect. From dassyre, to halt

**del,** gold

**Delyr,** Evverran mining town. Lit. Narrow-gold

**el-ela,** tree. Coll.

**elond,** ironbark tree

**emsparyx,** lizard. From yrk, yrx, legs and emspar, snake (from ema, poison, sparthe, to kill)

**end,** apple

**Eskan Helken,** Lit. Red Castle. Aedric fastness in Hethria, q.v.

**Estar,** Confederate republic. From tar, flower, ais, sweet

**Etalveth,** Assharran town. From etal, sunset, veth, first, i.e. westernmost

**Evverran,** Confederate kingdom. Possible corruption of Berrian, q.v.

**eygnor,** magpie. Lit. black-white, sweet, from eygja, black, nor, white, with play on anor, song

**fanx (pl. fann),** dog

**femaere,** demon. Lit. cruel-shadow, from feng, moon, fell, cruel, with supernatural overtones

**femaerel,** ghost-gum. From femaere, demon, el-ela, tree

**feng,** moon

**fengthir,** aedric art. To command imperceptibly. Lit. to draw like the moon

**Fengthira,** Aedric personal name. Lit. Moonlight, from feng, moon, thira, light

- feox**, derogatory aedric term for humans
- fimbravos**, desert spider lily. From fimber, lily, havos, spider
- fimbrethal**, fringed desert lily. From fimber, lily, ethal, hair, beard
- fig-fyng**, green
- fighend**, emerald. Lit. green stone
- finlythe**, water-loving tree. Lit. green-leaf
- Frimmor**, Assharan province. From ferim, dairy-herd
- fyr-x**, kelpie sheep-dog
- gar**, skin, hide
- Gebasterne**, Everran town. From geber, east, asterne, lookout point
- geber**, east
- Gebria**, Everran province. Lit. East-land
- Gebros**, Lit. East-wall, from geber, east, os, wall
- ghend**, stone
- Gjerven**, Assharan province. From gjer, grass, ven, way, road
- gweldryx**, parrots. Lit. tapestry
- gyar**, foot (Gjerven dialect)
- Haskar**, Lit. Harran's child, from iskar, child
- hasselian**, swamp. From haz, earth, ilien, water
- Haz**. Sky-lord worshipped in Everran. Lit. Earth
- Hazghend**, aedric line and Confederate nation. Lit. Earth-stone, from haz, earth, ghend, stone
- hazian**, ruby. Lit. earth-fire, from haz, earth, iahn, fire, flame
- Hazyk**, inhabitant of Hazghend, q.v.
- heage**, branch (tree) family (sentient beings)
- Heagian**, aedric line. Lit. Fire-branch, often called Flametree
- Helkents**, range in the Confederacy. Untranslatable term for red of earth or rock
- hellien**, eucalyptus. Coll. From ilien, water, el-ela, tree

- helve**, V. imp., to go
- helymfet**, echidna. From helym, barb, fetha, hat
- heshnor**, Hethrian desert flower. Lit. white-sheep, from huesh, sheep, nur-nor, white
- hethel**, olive (both fruit and tree). Lit. desert-tree
- Hethmel**, region of western Hethria. From heth, desert, meldene, west
- Hethox**, indigenous Hethrian inhabitant
- Hethria**, country. Lit. Desert-land
- hisgal**, box tree. From his, gray, gar, skin, el-ela, tree
- Histhira**, Confederate range, aedric line. Lit. Gray-light, from histh (pronounced hiss), gray, thira, light
- Holym**, Confederate country. Coll., cattle
- hyrne**, fang
- Iahn**, Sky-lord worshipped in Everran. Lit. Fire, Flame
- idrigg**, cold
- Ilien**, Sky-lord worshipped in Everran. Lit. Water
- ilienlythe**, parakeelya, Hethrian desert plant. From ilien, water, lythe, leaf
- implann**, prized type of wood. Possible "dead finish" tree
- imsar Math**, invocation. In the name of Math, q.v.
- istarel**, saltbush. Lit. salt-tree, from istar, salt, el-ela, tree
- keerphar**, wild bauhinia tree
- keld**, mine
- Kelf**, river. Possibly connected with helkent, q.v., and keld, mine
- Kelflase**, Everran town. Lit. Kelf-crossing, from lase, lash, q.v.
- Kemrestan**, Assharran province. From kemres, border, march
- Kemreswash**, Everran River. Lit. Border-water, from kemres, border, wash, river
- ker**, house, in sense of dynastic dwelling place

**kerrothar**, Hethrian desert yam. From quorroth, yams, tar, flower

**Kerym Iswyre**, Hethrian salt-lake. Lit. Great Salt-lake, from kerym, lake, istar, salt, wyre, great

**keva**, orange fruit

**langu**, python. Assharran semi-mythical being

**lase-lash**, suffix, meeting, crossroad, junction

**lathare**, aedric art. "Mindspeech," verbal telepathic transmission

**lethar**, dream

**letharthir**, aedric art. To mesmerise. Lit. to make dream, from lethar, dream, thire, to be

**los**, spring, or contraction of lios, face

**Lossian**, aedric personal name. Lit. The Well or Face of Flame

**Los Velandryxe Thira**, aedric artifact used for wreve-lethar, the supreme art. From los, well, velandryxe, wisdom, thira, light

**lydel**, possum. Lit. tree-hopper, from el-ela, tree, lyde, to hop

**lydsith**, kangaroo-paw flower, staghorn ferns. From sith, paw, lydwyr, kangaroo, q.v.

**lydwyr**, kangaroo. From lyde, to leap, hop, wyre, great

**lydyr**, hopper. Coll. Small marsupials, bandicoot, paddy melon, kangaroo rat, etc. From lyde, to hop

**ly'ffanx**, kangaroo dog. From lydwyr, kangaroo, fanx, dog

**lyng**, morning

**Lynghyrne**, Confederate mountain. Lit. Fang of the Morning

**Lynglos**, Everran town. Lit. Morning Face or Spring

**Lyngthira**, country. Lit. Morning Light, from lyng, morning, thira, light

**lythian**, poinsettia. From lythe, leaf, iahn, fire, flame

**maer**, shadow

- Maerdrigg**, aedric personal name. Lit. Cold Shadow, from maer, shadow, idrigg, cold
- Maerheage**, aedric line. From maer, shadow, heage, family
- maerian**, opal. From maer, shadow, iahn, fire, flame
- Maer Selloth**, Everran town. Lit. Shadow of the Stars
- mallavos**, Hethrian desert plant. From mallar, orchid, havos, spider
- math**, good
- Math**, abstraction. Aedric equivalent of god
- Meldene**, west. Region of Everran
- morg**, black
- morgar**, "Moreton Bay ash." From morg, black, gar, hide, skin
- morglin**, coolabah. From morg, black, gar, hide, bark, el, tree, ilien, water
- morglis**, Hazghend cape, or black kite. Lit. black-nose, from morg, black, perraglis, hawk
- Morheage**, aedric line. From morg, black, heage, family
- Moriana**, aedric personal name. Lit. Black Fire
- morrethan**, Sturt's desert pea. From morg, black, rien, crimson, iahn, fire, flame
- Morrya**, Assharran province. Lit. Black-land, ref. to volcanic soil
- morval**, crow. From morg, black, val, wing
- nerrys**, ocean
- Nerrysyr**, Lit. Peaceful Ocean, from nerrys, ocean, alsyr, peace (from ax, not, syre, to weep)
- Nerthor**, Lit. Inheritor
- ningu**, Hethox dialect. Nardoo seed
- norgal**, ti-tree, paperbark. Coll. From nor, white, gar, skin, el, tree
- nullik**, Hethox dialect. Edible seeds



**os**, wall

**Ozym**, personal name. Lit. Subtlety

**Pellathir**, aedric art. To cause illusion. From pelere, to bear, carry, lethar, dream

**pen**, Everran prefix, town

**Penhazad**, town. Lit. Flat-town, from hazad, plain

**perraglis**, hawk. From perra, eagle, aglis, small

**pharaon**, Lit. maker, creator. Loose aedric usage for "god"

**pharaone**, aedric art. Telepathic vision. From phare, to see

**Pharaon Lethar**, Lit. maker's dream. Aedric term for (1.) the physical universe and (2.) the Other World of ghosts and shamans. Cf. Hindu concept of Brahm who creates by "dreaming" the world

**phare**, V. to see. Aedric art—to "read" an entire psyche

**phathire**, aedric art. Mental re-creation of the past. Lit. see-being, from phare, to see, thire, to be

**Phathos**, soothsayer. Lit. seeing eye, from phare, to see, os, eye

**Quarred**, Confederate country

**ras**, source (of a river)

**Raskelf**, Everan district. Lit. Kelf-source

**resh**, Everran district or province

**rhodel (pl. rhodellin)**, gold coinage of Everran. From rho, round, del, gold

**rienglis**, red kite. From rien, crimson, perraglis, hawk

**Rienzar**, Hethrian gibber-plain. From rien, crimson, hazad, plain

**Rihannar**, continent. Lit. The Island

**rivannon**, scented tree. Possible kind of cassia

**ruagesthyn**, aedric "black" (outlawed) art. Lit. to call the dead, from ruagyre, to call, asthyn, dead

**ruan**, mind

**Ruanbrarx**, aedric arts. Lit. mind-acts, from ruan, mind, bri-arx, p.part. of briave, to act, q.v.

**Ruanbraxe**, aedric art. To block from other aedryx' awareness. From ruan, mind, braxe, shield

**ruand**, numeral one. Also leader, head capital, etc.

**saeva**, wind

**Saeverran**, Everran tableland. Lit. Windy-Everran

**saeveryr**, wagtail. Also cape, "where the wind turns," from saeva, wind, ryde, rythe, to turn

**Saphar**, capital of Everran. Lit. Delight

**Sathel**, wanderer, nomad

**scarthe**, aedric art. Telepathic perception. Lit. to read verbal thought

**Sellithar**, personal name. Lit. Starflower

**sellothahr**, frangipanni tree. Lit. sun-star, from selloth, stars, ahltar, sun

**sha**, adverb. That way, there

**shophet**, annually elected Estarian head of government

**slief**, plateau, tableland

**Stirghend**, region of gibbers in northern Hethria. From stiri-and, north, ghend, stone

**stiriand**, north. Region of Everran. Aedric line

**tar**, flower

**Tasmar**, Assharran province. From tassa, cloth

**terrephal**, sandstorm fore-runners. Lit. sand-dancer, from terre, to dance, phallyr, sand

**terrian**, jacaranda. Corruption of thereyx, purple, iahn, flame

**Thangar**, Assharran province. From thangos, hilly

**Th'lahn**, Aedric personal name. Lit. The Flame

**thillian**, diamond. Lit. light-water-fire, from thira, light, ilien,

water, iahn, flame

**thira**, light (physical)

**Thiryx**, Sky-lord, worshipped in Everran. Lit. Air. See also Haz, Ilien and Iahn

**thorgan**, king

**tingrith**, numeral. Eight, all. Quarred government, loose confederation of aedric lines

**Tirien**, aedric line. Lit. South-water, from tirs, south, ilien, water

**Tirien Neth**, part of Kemreswash river. Lit. Southern Channel, from tirs, south, neth, watercourse

**tirs**, south. Region of Everran

**Tirstang**, Crux Australis. From tirs, south, tang, cross

**torjer**, spinifex. From torq, ugly, gjer, grass

**ulfann**, dingoes. From ulce, wild, fanx (pl. fann), dog

**Valinhynga**, Venus. Lit. Horns of the Morning, corruption of valin, horn, lyng, morning

**vannor**, cicada. From val, wing, anor, song

**vaxy**, Hethox dialect. Grass with edible roots

**Velandryxe**, wisdom. Lit. high-seeing, from vel, high, andeir, second or non-physical sight

**velandyr**, sage. Lit. high-seer

**ven**, highway, main road

**veth**, first

**vist**, adverb, now

**Vorn**, aedric personal name. Lit. The Tooth

**vyrne**, Lit. the last. Nickname of Vorn, q.v.

**wash**, river

**wreve**, V. to master, control

**wreve-lan'x**, aedric art. Beast mastery. From wreve, control,

lanyx, coll., beast

**wreviane**, aedric art. Pyrokinesis

**wrevurx**, aedric art. To control the weather. From wreve, control, vur, sky

**wrock**, ridge, esp. watershed

**wyre**, great

**wyresparyx**, goanna. From (1) wyre, great, (2) emsparyx, lizard, from emspar, snake (ema, poison, sparthe, to kill) and yrk, yrx, legs

**xaira**, farewell, separation, aedric myth of same

**yeld**, blood

**yeldtar**, poppy. Lit. blood-flower

**yeltath**, bloodwood tree. From yeld, blood, tath, wood

**yst**, truth

**Ystanyrx**, Lit. true songs. Cosmogony as preserved by Everran harpers

**Ystir**. Invocation. Truth it is

**yx**, sing., before, pl., eyes

**yxphare**, aedric art. Clairvoyance. Lit. to see before

**Zem-and-Zam**, Assharran personal names. Lit. This-and-That

**Zyphryr Coryan**, Assharran capital. From zyph, city, wyre, great, coryan, maze, labyrinth



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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**Sylvia Kelso** lives in North Queensland, Australia, and has been writing or telling stories for as long as she remembers. *The Red Country* is her third fantasy novel, the sequel to her well-received *Everran's Bane* and *The Moving Water*. She has also published poetry in Australian literary magazines, and has a Creative Writing MA for an alternate-history/SF novel set in alternate North Queensland. She lives in a house with a lot of trees in the garden, but no cats or dogs. She makes up for this by playing Celtic music on a penny whistle and is now learning the fiddle as well.







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